

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Summary of Information and Crime Statistics

Summary

- The Mountaineering Council of Scotland carried out a Freedom of Information Request to Police Scotland in February 2015 as the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority had been unable to supply crime statistics and data to support their claim that camping Byelaws were a successful way to deal with anti-social behaviour and overuse of loch shores;
- A detailed review has been carried out of the crime data supplied by Police Scotland following the Freedom of Information Request;
- The information that is now available shows that figures used in the consultation document were not an accurate reflection of the crime statistics;
- As a consequence, the Your Park consultation process was significantly flawed.

Introduction

Operation Ironworks started in the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park in 2008. A multi-agency initiative involving the police, National Park Authority and Forestry Commission Scotland staff, it involved “high profile patrols to deter criminals, combat disorder and promote respect for the natural surroundings” (Central Scotland Police Press Release Sept 2009).

In the first year of Operation Ironworks, a manual sift was made of all crime reports and STORM calls (all log entries from all calls) to pull out only those that were relevant to ELL. Using traditional policing methods (this was 3 years before the ELL byelaws were introduced), all anti-social behaviour crimes and reports to the police were reduced by 60%. There has been NO similar exercise done to isolate crimes on ELL from others in the area since 2008.

Byelaws were introduced in East Loch Lomond in June 2011, with 2012 being the first full year of operation (the byelaws run from 1st March to 31st October). In addition to the Byelaws that prohibited wild camping, there was also an alcohol ban and a rural clearway and a new camp site was provided at Salloch.

Crime Data for East Loch Lomond

Police Scotland has stated in the FOI request that “the marker for “Operation Ironworks” is not a mandatory field and as a result it is not routinely added to all relevant crime reports”. This means that it is impossible to separate crimes relating to Operation Ironworks from other crime without a significant amount of work analysing every individual crime report. In other words, the statistics being used could include for example domestic assault and crimes committed within the urban areas and related to events (such as the Drymen Show and dance) within the settlements.

Crime data has been presented to the NPA each year since the start of Operation Ironworks in the form of a Police Report. Despite the fact that Police Scotland has stated that Operation Ironworks crimes cannot be separated out, they have detailed “Operation Ironworks Crimes and Calls” in a report to the NPA “National Park Crime Updates – April to September 2009 to 2012”. This includes data for the Drymen beat which includes East Loch Lomond and the settlements of Drymen and Balmaha as follows:

APPENDIX B

	Drymen (KY09)			
	09	10	11	12
Op Ironworks Calls	166	126	43	40
Acquisitive	1	4	2	1
Animal Offences	0	0	0	2
Consumption Alcohol	0	0	0	2
Disorder	3	2	0	0
Drugs	3	5	5	0
Firearms	0	1	0	0
Litter	0	4	0	1
Minor Violence	5	0	0	0
Other Crime	6	3	1	4
Road Traffic	6	31	28	16
Vandalism	6	12	0	2
Violent	0	1	0	0
Weapon Offences	1	2	0	0
Crime Total	31	65	36	28

It should be made clear that this data is for the whole of the Drymen Beat area and the ELL Byelaw area is a small part of this beat. It is impossible to separate ELL crime from those committed in the rest of the Drymen Beat area without obtaining the details of every single crime.

This table shows clearly that there was a reduction in minor violence from 5 to 0 before the byelaws came into existence. The 12 cases of vandalism in 2010 was inflated by 5 crimes in one area in the built up areas (outwith the ELL byelaw area). Crimes of disorder and minor violence had reduced before the introduction of the ELL Byelaws due to targeted policing.

Anti-social Behaviour calls and crimes

Police Scotland has provided data on Anti-social Behaviour calls and crimes to the NPA that is heavily caveated as follows:

- “ASB calls and crimes have been in a downward trend over the six beats in the last four periods” Nat Park Crime Updates April to September 2009-2012;
- “The majority of calls and crimes occurred in urban areas”, Nat Park Crime Updates April to September 2009-2012;
- “The main increase in the 2012 period was Vandalisms although these were mostly around the greater populated area”, Nat Park Crime Updates April to September 2009-2012;
- “Urban areas experienced the greatest amount of alcohol related crime in these beats”, Nat Park Crime Updates April to September 2009-2012.

It should be noted that all of the six police beats include urban and rural areas and as stated above, it is not possible to separate out where the crimes took place.

APPENDIX B

From data supplied in the FOI request, the following table has been drawn up for anti-social behaviour calls and crimes, showing the change in actual numbers and percentage change from 2009 to 2012:

Data from April to September for 2009 to 2012.

	Calls		% change	Crimes				% change
	2009	2012		2009	2010	2011	2012	
Killin	15	12	20% drop	6	5	5	3	50% drop
Crainlarich	15	9	40% drop	9	6	4	3	67% drop
Lochearnhead	36	20	44% drop	9	14	11	6	33% drop
Callander	202	108	47% drop	63	50	29	39	38% drop
Aberfoyle	39	36	8% drop	11	12	24	16	45% increase
Drymen	112	56	50% drop	27	34	16	5	81.5% drop

East Loch Lomond comes under the Drymen Beat and it can be seen that ASB crime was already dropping before the first full year of the byelaws in 2012. In addition, the weather in 2012 was poor, resulting in fewer visitors and the Drymen Show and Dance, the main cause of anti-social behaviour, was cancelled this year. The Operation Ironworks Report 2012 states that "Due to the reduced number of visitors this year, the South Loch (Earn) Road remained clear with a reduction in passing places being used for parking". Whilst this statement refers to Loch Earn, it is proof that there were fewer visitors in 2012. In addition there was a greater police presence as a result of additional National Park Authority funding. All of these factors will have reduced the incidents of anti-social behaviour and there is no proof that the reduction was as a result of the ELL Byelaws.

The reports where this data was shared with the National Park Authority stated clearly that "These figures include some areas and times out with Operation Ironworks" and "it is not possible to isolate Ironworks incidents and these figures includes calls/crimes outwith Ironworks not wholly attributable to the operation" and yet the National Park Authority continued to state that the byelaws had the effect of reducing ASB by 81.5%. The Police report also states that the figures "show the added benefit of targeted patrols", *Operation Ironworks Report 2012 to LLTNP*.

Police Scotland were unable to provide crime data specifically relating to camping in the Operation Ironworks area as "Operation Ironworks" is not a mandatory field and therefore the crimes are not recorded as such. There is therefore no way of showing that crimes were being committed by those who were camping, by day visitors or local residents.

Wider Park Area – relevant crimes and outcomes as part of Operation Ironworks 2011

43 charged with littering on lochsides – 40 received official warning letters having cleared up their litter and 3 reported to Procurator Fiscal;
5 charged with police assault, breach of the peace and vandalism at Loch Lubnaig;
1 charged with drunken navigation of a boat;
270 litres of alcohol was seized;
140 persons reported for drinking in public;
10 persons reported for urinating in public;
24 persons reported for possession of drugs;
3 persons reported for breach of the peace;
1 person reported for vandalism and attempting to pervert the course of justice;

APPENDIX B

May to July operation in Balloch resulted in 259 stop and searches and 50 anti-social behaviour tickets;

This year's activity has concentrated on anti-social behaviour and targeted drinking in public in an effort to reduce violent crime.

It should be noted that in the Operation Ironworks Crime Data Report for 2011, there is no mention of the 16 Anti-Social Behaviour Crimes in the Drymen beat (see table above) suggesting that they were not relevant to the Operation Ironworks initiative. Had they been significant then they would have been included in this report.

2012

Central Scotland Police:

"The outcome of this targeted activity has seen a 42.4% reduction in Anti Social Behaviour type crimes reported from 2009 to 2012".

19 charged with littering on lochsides – 14 received official warning letters having cleared up their litter and 5 reported to Procurator Fiscal;

No reports of any serious disorder linked to informal camping due to "intensive patrolling of the loch side areas by Police and Rangers";

1 man who was long term camping on the Forest Drive charged with littering offences and theft;

7 persons reported for drug offences in Killin and Lochearnhead;

50 litres of alcohol confiscated.

Strathclyde Police:

769 persons searched in Balloch Park – 384 positive stop searches for drink/drugs;

4 FPN for urinating in public;

4 FPN for Breach of the Peace;

Tayside Police

2 possession of controlled drugs;

3 vandalisms;

"A lack of anti-social groups to the area and good engagement from Police, Park Rangers and Water Bailiffs";

2 reports of littering;

"Due to the reduced number of visitors this year, the South Loch (Earn) Road remained clear with a reduction in passing places being used for parking" – this was due to the poor weather in 2012;

Site vandalism at Braeval;

Ticket machine vandalism and theft from 3 Lochs Drive and David Marshall Lodge (CCTV now installed);

Anti social camping at Loch Ard, littering and environmental damage.

2013

Central Scotland Division

110 FPN for violation of the clearway on ELL;

5 reported for possession of drugs on ELL – day visitors;

11 reported to Procurator Fiscal for assault, vandalism, carrying of knives, culpable and reckless conduct etc as a result of an incident at Loch Lubnaig;

APPENDIX B

Tayside Division

29 crime reports between March and October, 7 relate to crimes of violence and 6 were detected;

4 reported for possession of drugs;

“In all 24 of the 29 crimes reported were detected, reflecting the value of high profile police presence and good working relationships with bailiffs and other local residents”.

South Loch Lomond

92 crime reports for public drinking;

21 FPN for breach of the peace;

23 FPN for urinating in public;

9 crime reports for assault;

1 crime report for vandalism;

2 crime reports for littering;

37 individuals reported for drugs offences;

Argyll and West Dunbartonshire

“A robust and proactive approach was taken towards those intent in engaging in anti-social behaviour or other criminal activity. This approach resulted in over 300 positive stop searches for possession of alcohol, drugs or offensive weapons.....Periods of good weather impacted on visitor numbers and a subsequent increase in anti-social behaviour”.

2014

Forth Valley and Tayside Divisions

Caravans on North shore of Loch Earn – moved and prohibited from returning using Sect 68 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. This is one of the situations widely used by the NPA to highlight the “problem” that needs to be addressed with byelaws;

1 person reported for racially aggravated vandalism;

“2013 had seen a sharp increase in recorded crime in the NP area of Tayside Division, due in part to the much improved summer weather and the resultant huge increase in visitor numbers (Note – further back up of the reduction in ASB in 2012 being due to poor weather and hence less visitors rather than the ELL byelaws). 2014 has seen a fall in recorded crime from 29 last year to 15 in 2014 and no public space crimes of violence of any type”. Note – this crime reduction was without byelaws and due to increased police presence and patrols.

Argyll and West Dunbartonshire Division

108 FPN or reported to Procurator Fiscal for crimes of ASB or disorder.

West Loch Lomond and Luss:

9 FPN or reported to the Procurator Fiscal for crimes of ASB or disorder;

1 assault;

2 arrested for possession of knives;

1 reported for wilful fire raising in Luss;

95 stop searches with 35 of these resulting in confiscation of large quantities of alcohol, recovery of controlled drugs and offensive weapons.

South Loch Lomond

“A robust approach was taken towards those engaging in ASB or other criminal activity. This resulted in 340 positive stop searches for possession of alcohol, drugs or offensive weapons in Balloch / Gartocharn alone”.

APPENDIX B

Conclusions:

- A detailed review has been carried out of the crime data supplied by Police Scotland following a Freedom of Information Request;
- The information that is now available shows that figures used in the consultation document were not an accurate reflection of the crime statistics;
- As a consequence, the Your Park consultation process was significantly flawed;
- Police Scotland were not able to break down the crime statistics into those that were just as a result of Operation Ironworks and yet they provided reports to the National Park Authority with these statistics. These figures cannot be relied upon as they are not categorised based on "Operation Ironworks Markers";
- The figures being used for East Loch Lomond are part of the Drymen Beat of which East Loch Lomond is a very small part. The crime figures cannot be broken down into East Loch Lomond and the remainder of the area so again cannot be relied upon;
- In the wider park area, enforcement has been going on and numerous crimes reported, offenders charged and reports made to the Procurator Fiscal all without the use of Byelaws;
- Police Scotland were unable to provide crime data specifically relating to camping in the Operation Ironworks area as "Operation Ironworks" is not a mandatory field and therefore the crimes are not recorded as such. There is therefore no way of showing that crimes were being committed by those who were camping, by day visitors or local residents;
- As it is impossible to separate those crimes that are carried out by day visitors or those who are camping, there is no evidence to suggest that banning camping will reduce the amount of crime. An alcohol ban and clearway appear to be the most effective tools on East Loch Lomond;
- The poor weather in 2012 resulted in much fewer visitors and hence less crime across the National Park;
- Increased police patrols and funding through Operation Ironworks has resulted in targeted action and a reduction in crime. This is in areas where there are no byelaws as well as East Loch Lomond;
- Key trouble spots that were used and highlighted by the National Park Authority have been dealt with using existing legislation eg caravans on North side of Loch Earn;
- Had these detailed statistics been available at the consultation stage then responses from various organisations and individuals may have been different.

Reports used in the preparation of this report:

"Crime Data Shared between Police Scotland and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park : Operation Ironworks 2011"

"Crime Data Shared between Police Scotland and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park : Operation Ironworks 2012"

"Crime Data Shared between Police Scotland and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park : Operation Ironworks 2013"

"Crime Data Shared between Police Scotland and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park : Operation Ironworks 2014"

"Crime Overview 2014"

"National Park Crime Updates April to September 2009-2012".

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